



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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1981-82 WATERFOWL HUNTING SEASON FRAMEWORKS SET

The waterfowl hunting season frameworks proposed for 1981-82 by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are generally the same as last year.

Nationwide

Stabilizing duck season frameworks and limits. For this fall, the Service retains essentially the same duck season lengths and limits as last year as part of a 5-year cooperative study undertaken with Canada to determine how hunting regulations, duck harvests, and duck populations interrelate. By stabilizing major duck hunting regulations, waterfowl managers will be better able to evaluate the effects of factors such as habitat conditions, production, disease, and natural mortality upon harvests and the populations of ducks. An environmental assessment that describes the proposal was issued by the Service in August of 1980.

The following notable changes in regulations are proposed by waterfowl flyways.

Atlantic Flyway

-Zoning. New Hampshire is given the option to zone its duck season, and minor modifications may be made for zones in Maine, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

-Canada geese in Connecticut, New York, and Rhode Island. The Canada goose season in these States is being lengthened from 70 to 90 days and the framework

over

closing date extended from January 20 through January 31, 1982, to help alleviate crop depredation problems and discourage these geese from wintering in northern areas where they are subject to severe weather and possibly starvation.

-Snow goose season. The season for snow geese is lengthened throughout the flyway from 70 to 90 days in recognition of continuing high population levels and crop depredation problems in some migration and wintering areas.

-Brant. Atlantic Flyway States may select 30-day seasons on brant with limits of 2 brant per day and 4 in possession in response to the improved status of the species and anticipated good production. The season has been closed since 1975-76.

Mississippi Flyway

-Zoning. Minor boundary changes are being made in Illinois and Michigan, and the duck season in Alabama's South Zone may be split.

-Canada goose quotas in Illinois and Wisconsin. In view of the downward trend of Mississippi Valley Population (MVP) Canada geese in relation to population objectives set in a management plan, the harvest quota for Illinois is reduced from 33,000 to 30,000 birds, and the Wisconsin quota from 30,000 to 20,000. Season length is reduced from 70 to 50 days for Canadas in the MVP of Canadian geese.

-Other goose regulations changes. Minor changes are made in bag and possession limits for Canada geese in Minnesota and Missouri, and in the regulations governing transportation of geese in Illinois, Missouri, and western Kentucky.

Central Flyway

-Zoning. Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming have the option to set duck seasons by zones. Other flyway States may divide their duck seasons into 3 segments in lieu of zoning.

-White goose season extension in New Mexico. In recognition of increasing goose numbers in New Mexico, the Service plans to extend the seasons through February 14, 1982, to help reduce depredation problems.

-Longer goose seasons along the Missouri River in South Dakota and Nebraska. Also in response to upward trends of geese, the Service proposes to increase the Canada goose season from 72 to 79 days in designated counties in these two States.

-Goose harvest units. In an effort to improve goose management programs in Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Wyoming, these States may establish goose hunting seasons by zones.

Pacific Flyway

-Framework relaxations for Rocky Mountain Canada geese. Several changes are being proposed in season lengths, frameworks, and/or limits for these geese which range through 10 western States. The relaxations are in response to long-term increases in this population. The January 1981 survey tallied 91,000 birds, the highest number on record.

-Relaxations on white geese in Pacific coastal States. Moderate liberalizations in season lengths and limits are being recommended for portions of California, Oregon, and Washington frequented by lesser snow geese, most of which breed on Wrangel Island, U.S.S.R. This goose population has increased dramatically in recent years and Soviet biologists report the best goose population in the past 10 years.

-Expansion of whistling swan hunting areas in Montana. Whistling swans may be hunted in two Montana counties rather than one in the 1981-82 season. The number of permits that may be issued to hunters to take swans remains unchanged.

-Experimental sandhill crane season in southeastern Arizona. An experimental season of 14 days, limited to 100 permittees, is proposed for the Wilcox Playa area of Arizona. Emphasis will be placed on harvest of lesser sandhill cranes, which are abundant. Hunting will be terminated should a risk arise to whooping cranes which sometimes appear in the area.

The Service's final frameworks for migratory waterfowl hunting were published in the September 9, 1981, Federal Register. State conservation agencies select their regulations from those offered in the final Federal frameworks and hunters should consult State regulations before going afield. Final late season regulations will be published in the Federal Register in late September.

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